Citizen Science Projects (MOOC) 4.9

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Citizen observatories can have a big impact on the people involved and the challenges they face. Citizen Observatories can help raise awareness and help people make decisions and change behaviour. They can also put pressure on companies and governments to innovate and create new services which are more sustainable and better for the environment.

One of the first recognised citizen science projects dating back to 1900 was the [Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count](https://www.audubon.org/birds); You might know this yearly event asks participants to record and upload details of the birdlife they see on Christmas day. But did you know that it was first proposed as an alternative to the traditional Christmas bird hunt? This was proposed by Frank Chapman, who advocated for legislation that would prohibit the illegal killing of birds.

It's also not just about science and nature. After the 2008 financial crash in Iceland, the city of Reykjavik took steps to crowdsource citizens' opinions to inform policy making. [Better Reykjavik](https://reykjavik.is/en/better-reykjavik-0) became an online consultation platform for citizens to share their ideas on the service provided by the city and to allow registered users to review, discuss and decide on policy matters through an open forum. Although this is not directly examining an environmental challenge, many of the ideas that were proposed and debated were wider socio-economic and cultural challenges related to environmental issues.

Citizen science data can help improve practical applications. [Leafsnap](http://leafsnap.com/) a project led by Columbia University, the University of Maryland, and the Smithsonian Institution used the data collected through citizen science to build an electronic field guide and one of the first successful plant identification mobile applications. Such applications have since led the way for further advancements, like the FlowerChecker and NatureGate. The GROW Observatory has used citizen collected data to improve the advice provided by their [Edible Plant Database](https://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/en/datasets/edible-plant-database) application, where you can discover which edible plants are best to grow in your local area and when to plant and harvest them.